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# CHILD WELFARE

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# PLACING OLDER CHILDREN FOR ADOPTION

Leon R. Lyle

Superintendent, American Homefinding  
Association, Ottumwa, Iowa

*This brief report of an agency's examination of its experience with placing older children for adoption should be of help to agencies concerned with the long-term care of older children.*

PEOPLE who want to adopt children generally want the experience of babyhood with the child. They want a child who has but little past that is not theirs to share. Therefore the great majority of the requests made to a child-placing agency are for babies to adopt. In our agency, in seven years, babies were asked for by 90 per cent of the couples. Yet in the past seven and one half years our agency has placed 323 children in adoptive homes of which 202, or 63 per cent, were babies under one year of age; 54, or 15 per cent, were children between the ages of one and four years; and 67 were children between four years and thirteen years. The 67 older children represent 21 per cent of the total children placed by the agency; that is, 36 per cent were over one year of age.

We knew that we could never meet the demand for infants made by hundreds of adoptive applicants every year. On the other hand we realized that we always had under care a small group of older children which could be considered as eligible for adoption were there prospective adoptive parents willing to accept them. Few prospective parents even of an age where they might be expected to want an older child came to an initial interview with the idea of taking an older one. Sometimes, too, applicants wished a second child to become a part of a family group with an older one or adopted child. Here again it seemed logical to us that the second child should be of an age to provide the companionship which was a reason frequently given for the adoption application.

This article is concerned with the placement of the 67 older children. In addition, eight children between one and four years were included to make a total of 75, because these were younger brothers and sisters who were placed in the same adoptive home with their older siblings. The children—40 boys and 35 girls—were placed in 58 adoptive homes. These placements were consciously planned to provide permanent homes for children who were deprived of their own home at an age when there is little demand for them. All children need the security of a permanent home. Therefore, rather than continued care in agency-sponsored foster homes over a long period, adoption should be provided when possible. It is recognized that the agency would have to make

boarding care placements for a large group of children anyway. However, every year certain children seemed to be the kind who needed and could use adoptive placement.

## Agency Policies and Methods of Placement

It was necessary to develop a clear statement of basic factors determining eligibility for adoptive placement of older children. We arrived at the following essentials.

1. Normal mentality, lack of outstanding physical disabilities, ability to get along with other children and with adults.
2. Reasonably attractive personalities and reasonably attractive physical appearance.
3. Apparent ability to adjust to a new situation, to accept the emotional ties inherent in an adoptive situation.

Part of the process included mental tests, physical examinations, and interviews with agency social workers. In each child's situation, of course, other factors entered in and were determined individually. It was interesting to us that very often the decision to risk adoptive placement could be determined quite soon after the child was admitted. However, activity toward adoption placement was never initiated until after the agency actually had in its files evidence of the requisite legal authority to make such a placement. Although the child might have been approached to sound out his feelings or clarify his understanding of the meaning of the adoption process, the worker did not risk working on an eventuality with a child until legal authority was a certainty.

All of these children were referred to our agency by other agencies, by county welfare departments or by child welfare services. Seventy-one of the children were committed by juvenile courts, most of them on orders of temporary custody, though some of them directly for adoption. In the latter group a child was accepted with the understanding that a period of several months' care for study of the child was to be provided. If the child proved not to be adoptable, we had recourse to the court for a change in the order

and the right to suggest a change in the plan. That could mean either that the child would continue in our care or be referred for care to another agency or institution.

The fact that all of the children were referred by other agencies meant that our agency had considerable freedom in accepting or rejecting a case in accordance with our policies. It could also mean that considerable work had been done with the child's own family. Some agencies, particularly public ones, do not have this right of selection. They may be further limited in planning by having to operate within more rigid legal restrictions with respect to authority to undertake adoption planning. There have been a few times in our experience when we were prohibited by juvenile court decisions from planning an adoption which we had recommended to the court. Most often we do not deal directly with the court. The local welfare workers who refer children to us for study and recommendations carry the responsibility of going to the court for the necessary sanction of our plan.

Work with the parents of the child, either on a voluntary basis or through the court, has often been done by the local welfare workers by the time the case has been referred to us so that the decision to release the child for adoption had already been made either by the parents or by the court. Other agencies may more frequently accept children for care directly from the parents. It should be recognized that there are children for whom adoption may well be the best plan but the agency may find it difficult or impossible to obtain the necessary release. The critics of adoptive placements by agencies seem to ignore this very real factor.

In a few of the cases included in the study—four to be exact—we worked directly with the parents and eventually accepted from them the relinquishment of their children for adoption. In one, because the case was referred to us by the local child welfare worker, there needed to be an especially close working relationship between the two agencies since the father of the children used both of us in deciding what should be done for his children. He wanted to provide for them. He was unable to do so because of illness. He wished too to know that the children would have a future with some foster parents. For a long time and through much mental distress this man wanted the help of both workers to find the solution that was most acceptable to him.

### **Selection of Adoptive Homes**

While there never were too many homes available for the placement of an older child, there were always

several. This gave us an opportunity to study the situation individually and to determine which home had most to offer the child. Aside from the usual criteria for the selection of an adoptive home it was possible, we thought, to know something about the resilience of the thinking of the foster parents when the subject of taking an older child was first mentioned. Their attitudes indicated their flexibility. A good many older people would want to prove their youthfulness by taking a very young child. Some who could accept intellectually the reasons for taking an older child often could not accept the child emotionally. Because of the difficulty in locating adoptive homes for older children, there was always a temptation to accept a proposed home without too many requirements. We found it only sound policy to know as much or more about the adoptive parents wanting an older child as about adoptive parents seeking to take a very young child.

Because an older child is more easily identified than a young baby, it was necessary to consider geography very carefully. The child's history told us of course where the natural parents and relatives resided. To avoid the possible difficulties involved in a child being sought out by his natural parents or relatives after adoptive placement, adoptive parents were sought at considerable distance from the home of the natural parents. This was possible since the agency places children in a state-wide area.

People interested in taking an older child need to accept the fact that the child may need considerable time to become attached to them as parents. Related to this is the child's natural desire to talk about his own parents for varying lengths of time and to a varying degree. When applicants learn of this or are conscious of these probabilities they may decline to accept the proposed child and will eliminate themselves as possible adoptive parents for an older child. Others will verbalize understanding of these factors and later find that they cannot "take" them in an actual placement situation.

### **Telling Child's Story to Adoptive Parents**

It is essential that prospective parents be told the story of the child's background and past experience in as much detail as possible, though without reference to names and places of residence of the natural parents. On the basis of the facts and before seeing the child, the parents could come to some decision about acceptance of the child. If the child is seen, accepted and taken on a probationary period pending adoption, the parents have available information that is helpful to them in learning to live with the child. At the same time the parents would also be free to



forget—since they did not have to speculate on what they did not know—the details of the child's past, particularly the doings of the natural parents which often are repugnant to the adoptive parents. In giving the history of a child there is always a natural desire to gloss over some of the unpleasant occurrences. Perhaps the entire story of the circumstances of the natural parents is not required but it is necessary to show how these occurrences may have affected the child and so brought him into the care of the agency. The prospective parents would usually like to have it that the natural parents were not so very nice after all, seem to like to exclaim, "But how could they give the child up?" This needs to be discussed so that the natural parents can be understood and their reason for giving up the child appreciated. It is important to discover these reactions and attitudes of the prospective parents because they are significant in deciding whether the child should be placed. Many prospective parents have never heard of such experiences as we have to relate. Some may not wish to hear but they should for the sake of the future. On the other hand it may not be necessary to tell the parents everything about the child's antecedents. Only that needs to be told which helps in understanding the child and explains the choice of the particular adoptive parents. The version cannot be sugar-coated or exaggerated; it must be truthful. All histories will have favorable and unfavorable factors. Favorable ones of which the child may be proud in later life should not be forgotten.

Sometimes the caseworker feels unable to present the history of a child because of some factor in it that she thinks no foster parent could possibly accept. The worker may be fearful about discussing the "queerness" of great-aunt Cecelia, and the drinking of the child's father. How often in presenting the child's history we hear the remark from the parent-to-be, "I haven't much to be proud of in my family tree," or "You could rattle a few skeletons in our family closet too." We need to know the people beforehand in order to decide how much they can understand and what.

For example in the child's family a number of members were known to have had webbed toes. The child too had webbed toes. Who, we thought, is going to be able to take this? We could not suppress the information, it was too obvious. So in the placement we progressed fearfully toward the matter of the toes. The Lord was with us that day because the prospective father spoke up and said, "I have webbed toes too." That was matching!

### Preparation of the Child for Placement

Some children need a longer period of preparation for adoption than others. What is needed can be discovered in interviews with the child in which an

explanation is made about why the child cannot return to his own home, how he feels about this and what he would like to do. Possible alternatives can be discussed—living in the institution some time longer, living in a boarding home, or living in a permanent home. An explanation is made of what adoption is, and how this is related to the child and his position in the home, what will be expected of him in the home by the adopting parents as to their social and emotional relationships. When a particular home is discussed, the picture of the home life as the social worker sees it is talked about; the interests of the parents in recreation, schooling, music, or art, or reading; what the home is like, the yard and neighborhood.

When the parents and child actually meet, and after a brief period of introduction, they are often left alone to get acquainted with each other. An office of a social agency is not always the most convenient place for continued getting acquainted. Perhaps the parents and child find it easier to get acquainted by going for a drive, or going downtown to have dinner or some refreshments. The parents or child may need to get together several times to get acquainted. If the parents wish to take the child home with them for a brief visit, the child should have the visit explained to him by the social worker as to its intent and extent. The child must know what the visit is so that he can treat it as a visit.

### Placement Process

Often the caseworker can tell what the outcome will be in the first few minutes after the prospective parents and child have met. There are parents who make up their minds quickly about a child while others are slower. The process should not be rushed. It is always possible to tell somewhere along the way what the reaction of the parents is to the child and the child's to the parents. After a meeting or several meetings the parents need to have an opportunity to discuss what they think and feel, as does the child. Most parents after hearing the history and deciding upon it and after getting acquainted with the child do have definite opinions about the child. Some cannot seem to decide even after long and uncomfortable periods of thought and discussion. It is then the caseworker's responsibility to take some initiative in deciding whether the placement should or should not be made. Children may find it difficult to express themselves but they do have ideas about whom they like and whom they do not like.

When the parents have decided to take the child and the child to take the parents, information previously given the parents about the child's physical

condition is furnished by giving them a copy of the medical record. A copy of the school records, without the child's original name is given. If the parents have already decided on a new name for the child, this is talked over with the child. If he has ideas on what his new name should be, these should be respected. The parents are told that the history given them is confidential and should be discussed with no one else, not even their relatives: the history was given to them to help them understand the child and be able later to answer his questions about his own people. Such discussions should take place only at home. The child is told that that is where they should be held and not outside.

### The Placement Agreement

The adoptive parents are asked to sign an agreement of placement for the child. This holds for the probationary period of one year. The document is in simple nonlegalistic language. It states that they expect to adopt the child at the end of a year or the time as extended by agreement; that they have the right to void the agreement but only after notice to the agency and an opportunity to discuss the difficulties; that the agency has the right to remove the child for cause after a discussion of the situation. The adoptive parents are given the right to baptize the child in accordance with their religious beliefs. It is understood that the agency's representative will call at various times during the year, for the purpose of helping the parents and the child in creating this child-parent relationship. Some parents may be inclined to use the probationary period as a period during which the child is on a trial placement. This should be avoided. If the decision has been made to take the child, it should be with the idea that the child is to stay and is to be adopted. Others do not wish the agency worker to visit. We need to make sure that the adoptive parents do not feel threatened by the worker's overprotective feeling for the child. Sometimes the worker of an older child may feel like his third parent. The self-sufficiency of adoptive parents needs to be encouraged. It does not call for the exclusion of the caseworker. The parents need to understand the significance of this probationary period and to use it in the right way.

### Termination of Agency Contact

In our agency, contact terminates at the completion of the legal adoption. Often adoptive parents like to maintain a friendly relationship with the agency and this should not be discouraged. However the occasion

may arise in later years when the position of the agency in regard to the parents and child needs to be clarified. Once an adoption is completed the child becomes the child of the adoptive parents, and therefore the agency no longer maintains its former position as a substitute parent. If in later years a problem develops in the foster home, the parents may look to the agency as the responsible party. The agency must then be governed by the legal requirements, by its own policies, and the setting in which the agency operates.

What is done depends to a large extent on the individual situation and what the agency is asked to do. Because the agency placed the child, it has at least a moral obligation to help the child and the parents. Nevertheless it should be made clear to the adoptive parents that the help the agency can give is the same that the agency gives to any parent, natural or adoptive.

### Characteristics of the Children

Statistics do leave out the human element: the six-year-old boy, who first accepted and then unaccepted the new foster four-year-old brother by going so far as to ask the brother's return to the agency. When his parents refused, he "acted out" his hostility by whacking the buds off the peony bushes.

The joy of the eight-year-old adopted boy when he learned that his own sister, aged seven, was coming to be his own adopted sister.

The acceptance by a young couple of three non-related children, one by one, over a period of four years.

And among the stories there are the failures: adoptions uncompleted, and children who had to be removed from one adoptive home, all for reasons that may inevitably escape analysis, however searching. The incompatible parties to adoption, as in marriage, oftentimes find successful relationships with other people.

#### Ages

Of the 67 older children, and the eight younger ones placed for adoption, 1940-1948:

1 to 2 years.....	1	7 to 8 years.....	12
2 to 3 years.....	1	8 to 9 years.....	8
3 to 4 years.....	6	9 to 10 years.....	5
4 to 5 years.....	21	10 to 11 years.....	4
5 to 6 years.....	8	11 to 12 years.....	1
6 to 7 years.....	7	12 to 13 years.....	1
Total.....			75

#### Mental and Physical

It is almost always the normal child physically and mentally that is considered for adoption. Sometimes it is possible for adoptive parents to accept a child with a physical handicap, or with limited mental

capacities, or with a reading disability or with a slight speech defect.

In this group of 75 children the lowest rating given to a child was IQ 76, the highest was IQ 129; 35 children, or 50 per cent of them, were in the average range of intelligence with IQ's from 94 to 105; 9 children, or 13 per cent, were low average (IQ 87 to 91); 6, or 9 per cent, were low dull normal (IQ 76 to 85).

In the high average group were 8 children, or 11 per cent, with IQ's between 106 and 109; 9 were rated as superior in intelligence (13 per cent) with IQ's between 111 and 119; 3 children, or 4 per cent, had IQ's between 120 and 129. The success of the placement seems to depend considerably on how carefully the selection is made.

### Characteristics of the Adoptive Parents

Fifty-eight adoptive parents took the 75 children: 42 parents took 1 child each; 15 parents took 2 children each; and 1 couple took 3 children.

Thirty-four of the couples had no children of their own. Fourteen had 1 own child. Ten parents had already adopted 1 child and wished to take a second child.

### Ages of Adoptive Parents

Since it was the agency's policy to urge the older couples to accept for adoption the older children, the great majority of the parents were what is called middle aged: 35 to 50.

	Men	Women
25 years through 29 years.....	..	1
30 years through 34 years.....	6	14
35 years through 39 years.....	13	18
40 years through 44 years.....	20	12
45 years through 49 years.....	15	11
50 years through 54 years.....	3	2
54 years through 64 years.....	1	..
Total.....	58	58

### Education of Adoptive Parents

Education	Men	Women
Completed 7th grade.....	2	..
Completed 8th grade.....	15	10
Attended High School.....	3	3
Completed High School.....	17	16
Attended College.....	9	19
College Graduates.....	9	9
Postgraduates.....	3	1
Total.....	58	58

The two men who completed the seventh grade were employed in relatively responsible and well-paid jobs on railroads. The eighth grade graduates were rural people. In this state rural people of the older age groups often had no opportunity to go on to high school; in more recent years the younger rural people are completing high school. Among the parents who had education beyond high school a number attended business college, or had teacher's training or nurse's training. The postgraduates included two attorneys, an architect, and a landscape designer.

### Residence of Child and Parental Status

#### Prior to Admission

The following two classifications show where the children were living before admission, and the parental status at the time of admission:

Child Living with:	Parental Status:
Mother only.....28	Parents divorced.....29
Other family.....19	Parents living together...13
Both parents.....13	Father dead.....13
Other relatives.....8	Parents separated.....10
Father only.....5	Mother dead.....5
Mother and stepfather...1	Mother unmarried.....5
Institution.....1	
Total.....75	Total.....75

#### Prior to Adoptive Placement

On admission most of the children 6 or over came to the receiving home of the agency. The receiving home can care for a total of 15 boys and 15 girls. The building is located close to school, churches, and community activities. The children are given a good deal of freedom of movement and, in spite of the inevitable institutional character, many prefer it to a foster home. Later after a short stay some of these children were placed in boarding homes before their adoptive placement. Those children under 6 were always placed initially in boarding homes.

Receiving Home.....	2
Boarding Homes.....	29
Both Receiving Home and Boarding Homes.....	15
More than one Boarding Home.....	5*
Total.....	75

### Length of Pre-adoption Placement

Varying lengths of time elapsed before the children were placed for adoption. Sometimes it was as brief

\* Each of these five children were cared for in three different boarding homes before adoptive placement. These replacements did not seem to have affected their ultimate adjustments in their subsequent adoptive placement.



as 1 to 2 months, and at times as long as 1 to 2 years. Two children had been in the agency's receiving home, when the writer came to the agency in 1940, for 1 year, 8 months, and for 4 years, 2 months, respectively. The first of these children, a boy, was placed for adoption at the age of 10 years, 4 months, and his adoption was completed when he was 11 years, 8 months. The other child, a girl, was placed for adoption at 8 years, 6 months, and the adoption was completed at the end of a year. They were placed in the same adoptive home, the boy first and the girl a year later.

Nearly half of the children were placed for adoption after being in the agency's care for less than 6 months.

1 month to 6 months. ....	36
6 months to 1 year. ....	18
1 year to 2 years. ....	15
2 years to 3 years. ....	4
3 years to 4 years. ....	1
4 years to 5 years. ....	1
Total. ....	75

In computing the length of stay for 8 children, the time was figured from admission to placement in their second adoptive home; and for 7 children boarding home placements resulted in adoptions, but the length of stay here was figured from admission to the time the adoption agreement was made.

The agency took an active role in advising the adopting parents as to age and sex of the child. From the agency's point of view it was facing reality as to the number and kind of children available for adoption. It was to their benefit not to make such restrictive requests as would greatly reduce their chances to adopt. The caseworkers did try to make suggestions that would be appropriate to individual homes.

The following were the requests of the 58 families as to the sex of the prospective child:

Boys. ....	19
Girls. ....	18
Either. ....	16
Both. ....	5

As might be expected, 24 couples who already had a child, own or adopted, mostly wished to take a child of the opposite sex; 19 couples wished to do so, while 3 wanted a child of the same sex, and 2 would accept a second child of either sex.

The 34 applicants who had no children had less definite ideas: half of them specified sex, 10 wanting boys and 7 wanting girls. The other half would take

either a boy or girl or both, 12 wanting either, and 5 couples wanting both. As to age—the older group of adopting parents indicated willingness to take a child of preschool age, from 1 to 10 years of age, or from 2 to 6, or from 6 to 10, etc.

While we would sometimes ask certain parents to consider taking a child other than the sex and age they asked for if we believed that the child would fit into the home, actually most of the adoptive parents took the child of the sex they asked for. This happened with 69 children. Five boys were accepted when girls had been requested, and one girl was placed in a home although the parents had asked for a boy.

In regard to ages, 37 children were of the age that the adoptive parents had designated, while 36 children were older, and 2 were younger. The caseworkers not only tried to overcome the parents' predilection for the unavailable younger child but tried to place the child in the home where he appeared to belong even though the child may have been older than the adoptive parents first desired. There were of course adoptive parents who refused the agency's suggestion, which they were perfectly entitled to do without jeopardizing their chances for a child. We do not believe adoptive parents took a child whom they did not want. They did acknowledge the agency's choice. After all they had come to the agency knowing that an eligible child would be selected for them and knowing that selection was inherent in their relationship with the agency.

The applicants who found it hard to accept the selection by the agency were those who had adopted a child through a non-agency source. Usually few demands had been made upon them to show their eligibility as parents, and equally few standards were set up to measure the child's eligibility to be adopted. The couple who has adopted a child independently often wishes to take another child, and then finds the non-agency source unable to produce. They come to the child-placing agency and are faced with what appears to be insuperable and insupportable requirements. Often they cannot accept agency requirements. The agency is also faced with a dilemma. Our agency has placed a few children in homes where the first child was adopted independently and we have found that the working relationships with the adoptive parents are usually rather difficult. In this study only one family had taken a child from a non-agency source but it was possible to work out the relationships satisfactorily with the adopting parents before and after placement.



## HELPING CHILDREN MOVE INTO ADOPTIVE HOMES\*

**Charlotte L. Hammell**

Adoption Supervisor, Family and Children's  
Service, Baltimore, Maryland

*The thesis of this paper is that children of any age must be helped to move into adoption but that the help is different for the six-month-old baby as against the six-year-old child.*

A CHILD'S first meeting with adoptive parents is an experience of great import. The very air seems charged with excitement, tension, and with feeling to be expected at the brink of fulfillment. It is the culmination of an operation begun by the own parent's request for release from parental responsibility, and the prospective adoptive parents' need to create a home for a child. Casework help in an adoption service is always connected with a living situation which the agency provides and for which it is responsible. Regardless of the age of the child, through a period of temporary boarding care the agency establishes the child's capacity for adoption by observation and knowledge of his background, constitutional equipment, and development. The temporary boarding care must include sufficient affection and encouragement to promote normal growth and development since the agency is responsible for furthering the child's adoptability. Through an adoption home study the agency has established confidence in the capacity of prospective parents to adopt.

The knowledge of the child and prospective adoptive parents is then used by the agency to form the casework judgment that these particular adoptive parents can meet the child's particular needs and offer opportunity for his continued growth and development. The decision to introduce child and family is fortified by the confidence of the agency in the ability of each to move into the relationship which begins when they meet. This confidence should not be confused with determination that the child and family like each other since each needs to be free to accept or refuse the relationship. The meeting of child and adoptive parents further tests and increases the knowledge of each and either confirms or negates the judgment of the agency. As skill and knowledge are developed and employed, there is decrease in the number of children who are not placed with adoptive parents after meeting them. The agency owes the child the protection and adoptive parents the con-

sideration of asking them to participate in an experience in which they can find confidence in each other.

### The Pre-adoptive Boarding Mother

Casework supervision in a pre-adoptive temporary placement differs from that in other forms of temporary care in that it carries the continuous thread of study of the child's suitability for adoption. The foster mother is the focus of supervision and participates in the determination of adoptability by helping the caseworker to know the child. It is important for her to have recognition of her contribution and knowledge of the steps used to know the child. The foster mother is asked to mother the baby but not to become his mother. Psychologically this is a difficult responsibility to carry. Foster mothers differ in personality and so in their way of taking, caring for, and releasing babies but they do need to feel their part in the general agency purpose in offering adoption service in order to take a succession of babies, give them affectionate daily care and then to let them go into adoption homes. This identification with the agency purpose of preparing babies for adoption placement is essential for foster parents who offer this kind of temporary care since their need of an individual child becomes less as they are able to feel their full contribution to a service to children. Acceleration of the tempo of pre-adoptive care, payment of the foster family in terms of service and availability, exchange between caseworker and foster mother regarding daily living care and medical and psychological examinations—all these define the role of foster mother as co-worker rather than as client.

Trouble is most keenly felt by many foster mothers in the experience of giving up the child. Supervision by the caseworker cannot remove the loss and pain in this experience for the foster mother but it can help by protecting the child from the full brunt of its expression. The caseworker presents the decision that it is time for the child to meet an adoption family and in order to be fully responsible needs to be able to

(Continued on page 12)

\* From a paper delivered at the National Conference of Social Work, April, 1948.

## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

### Message to Member Agencies:

December 16, 1948

IN October, 1948, the Executive Committee of the Child Welfare League of America, acting on the advice and suggestions of Howard W. Hopkirk and with his interests and those of the member agencies of the League in mind, voted unanimously but with deep regret to make it possible for him to retire from the post of Executive Director in order to relieve him of any possible pressure and strain that might conceivably interfere with a satisfactory convalescence.

Upon the urgent request of the Executive Committee, however, Mr. Hopkirk agreed to continue his services to the League in the capacity of senior consultant with special reference to surveys and the institutional care of children. Mr. Hopkirk's experience in the entire field of social work, and child welfare particularly, is of such a nature, however, that the Executive Committee stated that it did not wish to ask him to confine himself to surveys and institutional care, but rather to make these his special responsibilities.

At the meeting of the Board of Directors on December 3, 1948, the action of the Executive Committee was unanimously confirmed and Mr. Hopkirk is now spending a substantial number of hours each day on League business, some of them in the League office. His health is steadily improving but, acting under the advice of his physician, his program of activities is still limited. His physician gives him wholly encouraging reports with respect to his progress but stipulates that he must avoid fatigue and undue strain.

For the present, Spencer H. Crookes will continue as Acting Executive Director. The Executive Committee authorized the President to appoint a committee to conduct a search at once for a successor to Mr. Hopkirk.

It is a great pleasure to be able to give you a favorable report on Mr. Hopkirk's health. It is, of course, a disappointment, both personally and officially, to announce his retirement as Executive Director. We are delighted that he will be able to serve the League in the capacity of Senior Consultant. There is no person in the United States, to my knowledge, who has been a more earnest and devoted advocate for children than Howard Hopkirk. He has carried a great burden with admirable spirit and high courage. He has brought the League through difficult days, and he has been mindful at every moment of his obligations to member agencies and, above all, of his obligations to children.

I know you will join with me and with members of the Board in expressing to Mr. Hopkirk our warm appreciation of the service he has given and our great satisfaction that he is to continue with us in a capacity where his wisdom and judgment will be of increasing value in the fulfillment of the League's purposes.

The staff of the League joins me in sending warm holiday greetings to all of you.

LEONARD W. MAYO

## READER'S FORUM

December 14, 1948

Dear Editor:

I have read with great interest the recent communications to *CHILD WELFARE* regarding adoption of Negro children. It is my sincere hope that this subject will be kept before us through the subsequent issues of the magazine and in other ways which may be suggested. Through sharing of our experiences and findings nationally it may be that we can join forces most effectively.

From 1940 to 1944 the Illinois Children's Home and Aid Society placed several Negro children in adoption homes each year. During 1943-1944 it became increasingly apparent that the agency's infant boarding homes were bursting at the seams with Negro children who could be placed in adoption homes if suitable homes could be found, that these children were subjected to replacements and lack of security inevitable in a boarding home program, and that in Chicago an unmarried Negro mother had little choice as to her plans for her baby since relinquishment for adoption was often not possible for her. With the encouragement and approval of the Council of Social Agencies and Community Fund of Chicago a Negro caseworker was added to the adoption services. Later a second Negro worker joined the staff of the Adoption Division. Each inquiry regarding adoption was given careful consideration. The applicants seemed to feel much more comfortable talking with a member of their own race than with a white person. The Negro staff became increasingly skillful in understanding the various aspects of the cultural and racial factors that characterized the applicants and the approach of individual families to adoption and their motivations.

Every opportunity to speak before groups in the community was accepted with enthusiasm by both white and colored workers. Information regarding adoption, the agency's philosophy and methods of work was given to individuals whom our staff members met socially and when discharging their profes-

sional duties. The facilities of the press and pulpit have been utilized.

Throughout this period the agency has accepted applications from other states. Co-operative arrangements have been worked out with the various Divisions of Child Welfare of the State Departments of Welfare whose personnel have been most co-operative, often working beyond the line of duty, to enable a permanent plan to be made effective for some child.

Although the number of adoption placements of Negro children has been small as compared with the need, averaging 25 children each year since 1944, the staff has maintained its conviction that adoption of Negro children is possible. That is not to imply that we have not been faced with tremendous obstacles, both psychological and material. Often we have found ourselves slipping into the bog of discouragement because we were unable to find a suitable home for a specific child. We have much yet to learn with regard to some unique obstacles. These obstacles include the generalizations frequently made as to why Negro families do not wish to adopt children, or do not wish to work with an agency; the difficulties in finding a child who is appropriate in appearance for a family; the biases and the lack of comprehensive knowledge of what constitutes "normal family life" held by both white and colored workers.

The conviction of the staff has been greatly strengthened by the response to the article in a recent issue of *Ebony* magazine. This article was the inspiration of one of the adoption workers who not only conceived the idea but who with other members of the staff and the Director of Public Relations worked out the details with the staff of *Ebony* magazine. To date over 200 letters of inquiry from families living in 38 states and Guam have been received.

(The states from which no inquiries have come are: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Oregon, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, North Dakota and Idaho.)

To forestall a possible flood of inquiries from other agencies as to the possibility of sharing in what may seem to be a newly found gold mine, let me hasten to say that each inquiry is being acknowledged and an application blank sent. As the blanks are returned we shall work through the various State Divisions of Child Welfare as we have done in the past, asking for clearance and study of the home either by its personnel or by an approved child welfare agency. In instances where it has been found that an agency in the community in which the family lives has a child that is eminently suited to a family which we are considering for a child we have deferred to the local need. Our objective is the same; to find the best possible home for each child and we gladly join forces with any other agency to realize that objective.

On the basis of our experience, meager as it may be, we well know that it is highly important to continue to consider these questions:

How can an adoption program be interpreted?

What methods and means can be utilized, such as press, radio, pulpit?

What groups can be enlisted to assist us in offering opportunities for the presentation of an adoption program?

Who are the citizens who will be effective in sharing with us this social responsibility?

What have we learned to add to our knowledge and understanding in the selection of suitable adoptive homes?

I would like to suggest that all agencies give this matter the careful consideration it deserves. Consider these and related questions! It is obvious that we must develop and utilize every local resource. As agencies gain experience, significant material could be made available to all.

We therefore recommend that all findings on this subject be reported to the Child Welfare League of America. Thus working together on a national basis we will develop a pool of experience and information that will be of value to all the Negro children needing adoption.

LOIS WILBY

Director of Case Work

Illinois Children's Home and Aid Society, Chicago

Editor's Note: The League's Information Service stands ready to serve in the development of the pool of experience.

### Newly Accredited Members

Children's Home, Inc.  
200 Todd's Lane  
Wilmington 269, Delaware  
Miss Alice D. Caskie, Director

Seattle Children's Home  
2143 Ninth Avenue, West  
Seattle 99, Washington  
Miss Dorothy Crounse, Director

### New Provisionals

Pasadena Welfare Bureau  
Room 301, City Hall  
Pasadena 1, California  
Miss Mildred M. Flaherty, Director

Children's Services  
State Department of Social Welfare  
610 Mount Pleasant Avenue  
Providence 8, Rhode Island  
Mr. Lawrence C. Cole, Administrator

\*Massachusetts Society for the Prevention  
of Cruelty to Children  
43 Mount Vernon Street  
Boston 8, Massachusetts  
Robert M. Mulford, General Director

\*Omitted in error from an earlier issue.



## HELPING CHILDREN MOVE INTO ADOPTIVE HOMES

(Continued from page 9)

accept the foster mother's feeling both for and against the agency's action in behalf of the child. The supporting element is that both have concern for the child. Although the boarding mother does not participate in the child's actual meeting with adoptive parents, she can either further or interfere with its purposes.

### Placing the Infant

The age at which the child is introduced to adoptive parents is only one factor though an important one. The main difference in focus derived from the age of the child is that there is more direct casework with the child as his age increases. The predominant need of the baby six months or under is to be known by the caseworker. Knowledge which includes not only the results of psychological and medical examinations but also the foster mother's experience with him as a growing being. For the very young baby received directly from the hospital, the casework help consists of first selecting a good foster home where he can have human relationships and secondly in the help to the foster parents who fulfill his needs. The focus of casework is the foster parent and not the baby.

Sammy met his adoptive parents at the age of six months. A week before his boarding worker had brought him to the playroom to meet the adoptive family's worker. At the time of this trip he was a relaxed, happy, trusting baby who cuddled down in an affectionate way in whosever arms were about him. On the day Sammy came for the visit with the family the foster mother reported that he had been fretful, difficult to dress, although he is usually so easy to manage. The foster mother thought he was aware that something was about to happen. I suspect that he was reacting to the tension and anxiety with which she handled him because *she* knew what was happening. He was relaxed and comfortable with the caseworker, made no protest when she changed his diapers. When the adoptive parents came into the playroom, Sammy was on the couch by his caseworker. The adoptive father was beaming, went right to Sammy, and said, "How's my boy?" Sammy responded with a bounce, began to jabber, dropped the toy on which he was chewing, and held up his arms to be taken. Sammy did react against the adoptive mother's first attempt to change his diaper by crying vigorously. She was tense, self-conscious, unsure in her handling of him, and he knew it. After he had been in the new home for four days, the adoptive family reported that he was eating and sleeping well and had settled down with them. The second night he was fretful, did not want to eat. They discovered two teeth about to come through. The adoptive father had been running around trying to find something to relieve him and finally hit on a few drops of rye whisky which he rubbed on the baby's gums. This immediately soothed him and he went off to sleep. The adoptive father thinks caring for a new baby may require more adjustments on the part of the parent than of the child.

Normally babies show the first specific emotional response to the mother between 3 and 4 months. At 6 months we need to watch the baby's reactions as indication of the degree of his loss in going to a new mother person. This varies with individual babies but it is my experience that at this age a baby can be moved from one home to another without serious disturbance to him. Much of the help is in the careful transfer to the adoptive parents of information about his care—not only medical information, formula, and his daily schedule, but what the baby has been used to in the way of individual response to his patterns. The purpose of this is to provide as much continuity as is possible in the care of the baby since at this age the mother still functions for him in so many ways. The young baby does need care and skill in handling from the caseworker and visits should be carefully planned to avoid feeding and naptimes so that the regularity on which he depends will not be upset. All of these are of inestimable value in helping the young baby preserve his equilibrium as he meets an adoptive family. Unless the adoptive mother has had experience or natural ease in caring for a baby her first efforts will be fumbling, insecure, and the baby has to experience her newness as well as her difference from his familiar mother. In the placement of babies 6 months and under, the important casework help lies in aiding the foster mother to release the baby and in helping the adoptive parents to take on the care of a new baby rather than in direct work with the child.

### The Toddler

As the baby grows, consciousness of himself and other people increases as does his emotional response to them. The 6-month-old infant begins to discriminate strangers, the 12-month-old is often shy of them. By 18 months, the child has begun to express growing independence through motor activity and connection with "things." Casework help to an older infant or toddler in moving into an adoption home requires more direct work with the child in preparing him to meet adoptive parents.

Sally was 17 months old when she met her adoptive parents. Her need of adoption was not established earlier because her father made an extended attempt to keep her following her mother's death. Sally had been in one boarding home from the age of 3 weeks until she was placed for adoption. She is a child of sensitivity, strong determination, and excellent ability who had established strong roots with her foster family. The tempo of her placement was slow and geared to Sally's needs. The adoptive family could have taken her more quickly. The boarding worker brought Sally in for two visits to the playroom, a week apart, the last one being the day before she met her adoptive family. On each of the preparatory playroom visits, the adoptive family's worker saw Sally but the boarding worker remained with her, leaving her for

the first time after she had found a beginning comfort with the adoptive parents.

From the adoptive worker's record of the first visit: "Sally was self-contained and non-expectant. Her worker and I initiated some play indicating a willingness to include her if she wanted to join us. Slowly Sally showed interest and curiosity with some tentative advances but never any real participation. During the next visit, Sally was more relaxed, able to play with toys, laugh with the workers and began to show some of the free activity of a toddler. Sally was cautious in meeting her adoptive family who had been prepared for her slowness and could give her time. Sally had a long visit with her adoptive family in which she had begun to show herself off proudly, was very active and even said a few words, but she seemed to sense the finality of the goodbye from her boarding worker. She seemed physically to droop and shook her head in protest. After her worker left, Sally cuddled down against her adoptive mother and seemed a little comforted."

These bits from the placement of a 17-month-old girl give a glimpse of the difficulty for her as she moves from one home to another. At this age it is expected that a child's behavior will show strong reaction against the strange and new as he knows well the difference between familiar adults and strangers. Sally is an unusually alert, sensitive child and was frightened by this beginning. It is in spots like this that the caseworkers need to weigh and balance a child's immediate need as shown by the feeling she is expressing and her need of a home. The whole placement had been tentatively planned with consideration of the needs of both family and child but freedom to vary the plan needs to be maintained if it becomes evident that a child has had all she can take. Relaxation of fear is seen through increasing familiarity with the new. Sally's fear shows her need of the caseworker as a known familiar person to carry her through this experience of leaving the boarding home if she is to maintain her ability to respond to new people. The caseworker supplies the supporting base for the child until she can establish a beginning comfort with adoptive parents.

### The Older Child

Comparison of the casework help needed in the placement of a toddler with that of a younger baby shows the increased importance of direct work with the child so that his fear and resistance to change do not predominate over the surge of independence so natural at this age. The importance of help to the foster mother in releasing the child and to the adoptive parents in preparing to receive the child is not lessened, but added to this is the child's need for casework help as he moves into an adoptive home. Casework with the foster parent, child, and adoptive parents cannot remove the experience of loss for the toddler but it can provide a transitional support and so lessen the shock of complete change.

The fact that a child has more difficulty in moving into an adoptive home as his age increases seems too obvious to need proof. Most normal infants can be successfully placed for adoption. What about the possibility of adoption for the two, three, four, five and six-year-old children who have passed the period of infancy without having secured a permanent home? It is my belief that adoption placement should be chosen for children of this age on a highly selective basis. The core of the criteria is the child's capacity to withstand the change and to establish satisfying relationships with new parents. The previous living experiences of older children for whom adoption is considered have often been disconnected, consisting of many changes of home and of care which have either interfered with or failed to support the natural growth process. When the normal early infantile need to relate to parent people has been seriously thwarted, adoption placement can be more destructive than helpful in its requirement of the child to accept new parents which psychologically he may not be able to do. Other children have established such deep emotional ties with their parents that they are unable to experience the loss and deprivation of complete separation and still move from it to an adoptive home which carries some need for unity if it is to be successful.

There are, however, some older children who still have the capacity to change and to use casework help as support in moving from one home to another. The content of casework with older children varies from that with an infant or toddler because the child's feeling is more actually and evidently conscious and his participation is not possible without his knowledge.

Susan, a six-year-old girl, whispered to her caseworker on the way back to her boarding home after a visit to adoptive parents, "Will they be good to me?" "I think so, do you?" Susan's face was troubled and serious as she said, "Sometimes I slip and wet the bed." I thought they could understand about things like that, but it is hard not to know for sure. Susan then recalled her other experiences in foster homes of which she had had several, ending with, "This one is supposed to be the last but I wonder if it will be." I said her new parents wanted a girl to live with them until she grew up and I knew they wanted *her* but I guessed she would have something to say about that too. Susan gave a sigh and then said, "I may not like it there." I agreed that she might not. Susan's face softened as she said, "I did like the people."

This bit shows all of a child's longing to belong, her fear of another rejection, suggesting the traumatic effect of experience on deep-seated personality patterns.

Direct work with the child is an important part of the casework help for older children whose language is well established. The method is varied to include the interview. Younger children can get some realiza-

tion of change through the caseworker's repetition of "bye-bye," "new mommy and daddy," at appropriate times but the actual experience of being taken away from the boarding home and of meeting with adoptive parents largely carries the realization of change for the child under eighteen months. This is not so for the older child who faces change consciously. The worker has the responsibility of letting the child know the destination and people to be met on each trip. Other content of direct work with the child varies with the individual child but usually includes reference to the past. As the child faces the prospect of change or begins to experience it the feeling about former changes frequently recurs. Questions about the new home, feeling about leaving the present home, decision about which toys, clothes, and possessions the child will take are usually part of the content of casework with the child. The criterion of the child's readiness to actually move into the adoptive home is that he has begun to choose what the caseworker has chosen for him.

## Conclusions

The nurture of children by their natural parents is deeply rooted in our society and in our psychology of individual growth and maturity. Adoption separates the child from the people who carry his biological heritage and substitutes parents consciously evaluated as capable of offering a favorable environment for his growth and development.

As caseworkers, I suspect we know less than we should about the continuous or recurrent problems for those whose living existence is divorced from those who gave them life. We do know that it is more difficult for the child to move to adoption as his age increases. If we really understand and believe this, we cannot escape the consequent responsibility of searching our programs of child care for ways of offering adoption to the children who need it before they have outgrown the capacity to make new, permanent ties with adoptive parents. Are we sometimes afraid to let own parents choose adoption for their child as soon as they can? How often do children suffer damage through our delay in planning for them both before and after they have been received into the care of the agency. As far as the child is concerned, the reason is less important than the fact. If he needs adoption he should get to it when he is young and his potentialities for using it are greatest. The responsibility of an adoption service is as great to provide living experiences for children which contribute to their adoptability as it is to determine it and to offer them casework help in making adoption their own.

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

### Clearinghouse Established

THE Clearinghouse for Research in Child Life was set up as a unit of the U.S. Children's Bureau. Clara E. Councell has been appointed director under the general supervision of Dr. Martha M. Eliot, associate chief of the Bureau. In general, the clearinghouse will serve as a center for information on current research being undertaken by the various disciplines in the fields affecting child life. This activity was established pursuant to the original mandate of the Children's Bureau to

"investigate and report . . . upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life. . . ."

#### Functions:

This clearinghouse will serve as a mechanism to collect from and distribute to research workers information about on-going investigations that directly affect children and mothers. The chief function of the clearinghouse is to help to keep scientists informed about such studies in progress that have not been fully described in publications, and to bridge the time-gap between completion and published report of these research projects. It is also hoped that this service will help promote collaboration and interchange of information between research workers in different specialties working in the various fields affecting child life.

#### Activities:

As an initial activity, the clearinghouse will canvass investigators in various fields for reports on current research and release a bulletin in 1949 to inform research workers of current investigations related to child life. In addition, the clearinghouse will provide information to research workers upon request. In general, it will help answer such questions as—

What research is now going on, inside and outside the Federal Government?

On what aspects of child growth and development and of family and community life is research most needed in relation to children?

The scope and coverage of the clearinghouse will depend largely upon the appropriations granted by Congress for this purpose. Eventually, the clearinghouse may also undertake bibliographic functions and the release of bulletins which will collate essential information relating to child life and to programs of services for children.

*League agencies are asked to report at once to the League's Information Service any studies now under way or being contemplated.*



## A BOARD MEMBER SPEAKS ON

### *Writing a Statement of Agency Function*

THE role of the Board and the staff in rewriting the statement of function of the agency began to crystallize itself when the agency Director requested permission of the Board to hold a two-day agency institute. The purpose of the institute was to allow the staff to take two days out to examine the function and practice of the agency and to put this thinking down in writing. At this time the Board and the Director of the agency had been actively studying those areas of responsibility where the Board and the staff could work together in joint committees. I had been appointed Chairman of the Function Advisory Committee. The Function Advisory Committee has as its purpose the studying of questions of policy and problems related to policy that are brought to our attention by the Director and the agency. Therefore as the staff prepared to hold its two-day institute so that it might study the function and policy of the agency, we as a Board committee began to relate to it.

One session of the institute was a joint meeting of Board and staff. A report on the work of the institute was given. The staff had done a magnificent job of reviewing the function of the agency over the years, studying how this function had changed, and had related its present thinking to the kinds of situations that the community was, at the present time, calling on the agency to deal with.

Following the institute a staff committee reduced the thinking of the total staff to a written report to serve as a basis for determining the policy of the agency. This was a voluminous attempt, and at this point the Board members of the Function Advisory Committee began to work very actively with the staff. Staff members were added to the Board committee and together they began to review the material. The Board members of the Function Advisory Committee were invited to attend the two meetings of total staff called to review the report from the staff committee. While I firmly believe that attendance of Board people at the staff's own meetings is not desirable as a general rule, in this instance it provided a stimulation that we as Board people so often find missing. We saw a continuation here in staff meetings of the kind of job the staff had done at the staff institute. We saw the staff concerned over the phrasing of a Statement of Function and Policy, concerned that we might not make clear to the community what our stand was, concerned if our Statement of Function was too flexible or too rigid in

terms of the needs of the community. The staff kept examining every plan of the proposed Statement of Function in light of various case situations that they had had to face at the intake point.

Following these two staff meetings my committee, which at this time was composed of three Board members, three staff members, the Director of Casework and the Director of the agency, met to review this tentative draft as submitted by the staff. We met several times and reviewed this entire document very carefully and thoroughly. As Board people, we tried to take the position of the laymen in the community in questioning the total Statement of Function. In this way, we not only helped the staff to think further and more clearly about some of its statements but we found ourselves learning a great deal more than we had ever known about how the agency works. As our goal we seemed to have three things:

1. The writing of a Statement of Function which would embody the policy of the agency and which would need to be approved by the Board.
2. That this Statement should be a clear, concise, well written statement.
3. That through this process the Board and the staff close still further the gap between them with respect to how much the Board knew about the function of the agency.

After these meetings our committee was ready to recommend acceptance of this Statement of Function to the total Board. This Statement was mailed to the entire Board well in advance of the next Board meeting. The discussion that we had at our Board meetings indicated that the Statement had been well read by the other members of the Board. One of the satisfactions that we as Board members on the committee had was that we could answer the questions of the other Board people concerning certain aspects of our Statement of Function. Previous to this we had always looked to the Director of the agency to answer such questions for us.

Close to a year was taken up in this total process but it was a year well spent. We recognize that the specific job is not behind us, yet we have a written Statement of Function and Policy which has been accepted by the Board and which has been distributed in our community. But we also realize, because of our experience, that the function of an agency is a flexible changing thing. For example, at the present time my committee is considering a certain part of our Statement of Function which we now see needs to be examined further.

WALTER B. BODENHAFFER

*Board Member, Family and Children's Service, St. Louis, Missouri*

# CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS

**Callman Rawley**

Executive Director, Jewish Family and  
Children's Service, Minneapolis, Minnesota

*This sequel to the paper on The Essential Functions of a Board of Directors which appeared in the December issue of CHILD WELFARE completes one part of the symposium on Trusteeship. It will be followed next month by discussions by both an executive and a member of a board.*

**I**N order to carry out the four essential functions defined in the December article a board must select its professional agent, the executive; it must continuously evaluate his performance on the job; and if it takes its responsibility seriously, it must evaluate its own performance.

## Collective Judgment Essential

It must also be able to act as a whole. By this is meant that its deliberations and conclusions express a collective judgment into which has gone the various individual first reactions to a problem, differences of opinion, concessions, new ideas generated in the heat of exchange, and finally a collective conclusion which is a new synthesis combining the best elements of all. The collective conclusion is of more use to the agency than the conclusions of any one individual or faction, if most of the board consider it to be the best resolution of differences to be had under the circumstances. In order to realize fully its group potentialities and responsibilities to clients and public, the board must be able to express itself fully as a group in all its parts. When board action is dominated by one man or one faction, no matter how brilliant the individuals responsible, it leads inevitably to conflict unrelated to professional issues and to a gradual degeneration of the capacity of the board members to carry out their tasks as we described them. In such an atmosphere it is impossible to decide questions on their professional merit or to have free creative group action.

## Executive View of Board Functions

How is an executive likely to feel about the four essential functions of a board?

The social action function he is likely to view with delight. The enabling function he will probably receive with a sense of relief. The channeling function he will take for granted. But the control function, which constantly evaluates his performance and potentially restricts or changes his goals and activities, he will feel as a threat. His natural tendency therefore is to use all his resourcefulness to make his position with the board in one way or another impregnable, to circumvent or overcome these threatening curbs by ingratiation, manipulation, maneuvering, or

politics of one kind or another. The executive who is weak in professional knowledge and skill feels compelled to do this because he cannot risk examination. The executive who thinks he knows, or thinks he knows where to find, all that is necessary to accomplish the professional objectives of the agency and believes that his administrative task is simply to get the board to let him do it and to provide him with the means for it, is also tempted to play Machiavelli in professional disguise. In his eyes the end, of which he is so sure, may seem to justify the means. In circumventing the control function, however, he is also circumventing what is professional in his relations to his board. A board would indeed be excess baggage and administration be no professional process whatever were it only a means for attaining the professional goals of the executive.

Disturbing and risky as the control function may be, it has in it, like so much that is dangerous and disturbing, the seeds of the creative. Just as the caseworker needs her supervisor's restraints and challenges for professional growth, and the supervisor needs them in turn from the executive for the same reason, so the executive needs them from somebody. If there were no one to evaluate him critically, and to check and challenge, he would become stale and ingrown, no matter what his inner resources, for he would be operating always in a world of his own making, in his own orbit, at his own pace, and in his own direction. In such a world there is no growth nor sufficient realism or responsibility. The control function saves him from this fate.

It also saves him from having to decide for himself how far the activities of the agency can go, a decision which, in any case, he cannot make for the practical reason that he possesses neither the authority nor the knowledge of community realities, and for the psychological reason that it would be like setting all the limits on himself, which is too much to expect of anyone. Most of the time he would not set them, and when he did, it would not have the same creative effect as a limit set from the outside. Therefore the board must stand for the outer reality of the community, with the authority and the responsibility to set limits as it understands that reality, making it possible for the executive to devote all of his time and

knowledge to making the most out of what the agency has to work with.

There is also this paradox in the control function: that while it constantly evaluates and checks and modifies and thereby restricts the executive, it provides him with the only real support and security he can have, for it is only through examination and evaluation that a board can know what is going on and support it. He cannot have the security, in other words, without the restriction, or—circumventing the restriction also circumvents the security.

The control function has an enabling effect in a broader sense, too, in that it leads to community support and security for the creative activities of the staff.

### The Board's Use of the Evaluation

This control function enables the board to discharge its special responsibility to the community and to the clients, and to obtain the sense of satisfaction and fulfillment which is most characteristic of membership on a board. It provides the impetus for the board's applying itself creatively to its other functions. Its circumvention by cleverness on the part of an executive or by being lulled by his generally good performance into a pleased, uncritical state of mind toward everything he does, will lead it eventually to feel frustrated (without knowing why) or confused as to its reason for being. Its function will seem dry and members will begin to stay away. "The executive knows more than I will ever know about the work," they will say. "The agency doesn't need me. It's in good hands. It can take care of itself."

Thus the control function acts as a cement to bind the board to agency.

It also acts as a cement to bind together a board's other functions, all of which are inseparable from the control function and dependent on it. For example, the enabling function does not represent just a desire to facilitate the work of the staff. That would be a function without essential responsibility. The enabling function is bound to the control function by the fact that it represents a desire to facilitate the work of the staff *because it is the responsibility of the board to see that the agency gives good service*. It is because board members feel this responsibility of trusteeship that they have the interest and the concern which makes them willing to give the time and effort to execute the other functions. It is because this responsibility is great that their interest and concern are great, greater than others', for interest and concern are in proportion to responsibility. If this were not so, their interest and concern would be indistinguishable from that of the man on the street.

Finally, the control function forces a board to learn the essential facts about the agency and to act responsibly toward it by analyzing and evaluating those facts critically. It is thus also a moral cement and activator.

### Executive Helps Board to Function

It is only out of a conviction of the profound use of the control function to himself and to the board that an executive is able to do what is perhaps unique to social work, and in any case calls for extraordinary integrity, inner security, and strength—to help the board carry out their control function by providing them with the instruments for evaluating his performance and by helping them to evaluate and control it according to their lights and responsibilities—a chore at times about as easy as assisting at one's own execution. Not only must the executive, however, not take the sting out of the control function or allow it to be bottled up until it steams, but he must actively help the board to discharge it without anxiety and guilt. For the board, too, sees this function in its dangerous restrictive aspects and does not like to exercise it until it has to. It needs help to do it.

### Qualifications of Board Members

What deductions can a nominating committee make from all this as to the necessary qualifications of a candidate for board member?

1. A highly developed social conscience.
2. Sensitivity to the particular social needs which this agency is organized to serve, and enough inner disturbance about them to produce a deep wish to satisfy them by an adequate service.
3. The ability to keep his own personal needs out of board deliberations. For example, in children's institutions many board members express an unresolved and unsublimated hangover from childhood feelings of deprivation and frustration by an excessively protective and emotionally undisciplined attitude toward the children in the institution, and an excessively harsh and punitive attitude toward the parents.
4. A genuinely democratic nature
  - (a) guided by the principle that the agency belongs to the whole community and not to a social set;
  - (b) and that the judgment of the whole board is always more valuable than his own. Thus he must be willing to contribute his best efforts even though he knows it will play only a part in the final decision.
5. From Number 4 follows the need for
  - (a) considerable self-control,
  - (b) adaptability,
  - (c) sufficient maturity to take rebuffs.
6. A high sense of responsibility in board deliberations with an interest in seeking facts, an attitude which never prejudices nor judges on insufficient evidence, and which is without bias or malice, and the ability to use the facts and opinions supplied by the specialist to formulate his own judgment about a particular policy without being either too accepting and self-effacing, or opinionated and domineering.
7. An adequate amount of time to give to board responsibilities.
8. The ability to express a community point of view in board deliberations and to get information back to it (the public



relations, channeling function of the board). This eliminates the recluse, the snob, and the individualist, no matter how brilliant.

9. A social conscience which will make him want full client coverage (protection of service) and make him sensitive to and disturbed about unmet social needs and willing to do something about them (the social action function).
10. On personnel matters, the ability to be guided by what will produce the best work in the agency, and hence provide the best service to clients (the enabling function), and not by his personal attitude on employer-employee relationships, which may be the product of class prejudice or of an unsatisfactory experience with his own employees.
11. The ability to let the executive carry out policy according to his judgment and not need to do the work himself nor make the executive his messenger boy.
12. A recognizable measure of prestige and influence in the community arising out of previous performance in communal activities.

What qualifications does a president need for the kind of responsibilities he carries?

1. The same things but to a higher degree.
2. A personableness and leadership which will make the other members of the board want to work with him.
3. The ability to use his position not to dominate but to draw out the maximum individual participation by each board member.
4. The ability to hold a board together and to integrate their differences into a new representative whole.
5. The ability to hold board members to their responsibilities.
6. The ability to assimilate professional content from the executive and to express it in a form suitable to the board and the community, thus serving as a channel from the specialist to the layman.
7. The ability and willingness to give far more time than is needed for board membership alone.

## REGIONAL CONFERENCES

The Southern Regional Conference will be held February 10, 11 and 12, 1949, at the Jefferson Davis Hotel, Montgomery, Alabama. The Chairman is Mrs. Edward Gresham, Director, Bureau of Child Welfare, Alabama Department of Public Welfare.

The Ohio Valley Regional Conference will be held March 17, 18 and 19, 1949, at the Netherland Plaza Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio. The Chairman is Mr. Duane W. Christy, Executive Vice-President of The Children's Home of Cincinnati.

The Eastern Regional Conference will be held April 7, 8 and 9, 1949, at the Ambassador Hotel, Atlantic City, New Jersey. The Chairman is Mr. Walter P. Townsend, General Secretary, Children's Aid Society of Pennsylvania.

The Midwest Regional Conference will be held May 1 to 4, 1949, at the Hotel LaSalle, Chicago, Illinois. The Chairman is Mrs. Mary Lawrence, Executive Director, Jewish Children's Bureau of Chicago.

The New England Regional Conference will be held June 6 and 7, 1949, at the Wentworth-by-the-Sea, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The Chairman is Mrs. Jeanette H. Melton, General Secretary, New Hampshire Children's Aid Society.

## THE NEED FOR DAY CARE CENTERS\*

*This statement sets down clearly minimum standards now recognized as essential. It says by implication what we have been saying directly as to the importance of the co-operation of health, welfare and education.†*

It is an accepted principle that under normal conditions a child's own home and his family offer the best background for his social and personality development. Due to the complexities in modern living, the community has come to provide many services to strengthen and reinforce the family. Proper use of these services may also help determine the extent to which it is necessary to arrange partial or complete separation of the child from his parents. The community also provides facilities to care for children who must be removed from their own homes. Since separation of a child from his parents is a serious emotional deprivation and social disturbance for which a child can never altogether be compensated, a complete separation should be effected only where careful study indicates that this is in the child's best interest.

Day Care Centers and Day Nurseries exist as part of the network of services the community provides to serve children. They provide for a partial separation of the child from his parents. The question of the social usefulness and the value of these centers in a total community program of service to families and children is analyzed in the following statement.

### Day Care Center Defined

A Day Care Center is an institution that cares for a group of children during the day. It is open ten to twelve hours a day to accommodate children who require the service at different times. A minimum of four hours' operation a day is essential. Children served usually range in age from two to twelve years. For children above the age of kindergarten enrollment, care is offered during the hours when school is not in session. Individual children attend the Day Care Center regularly during the week.

Day Nurseries or Day Care Centers were originally established to care for children whose mothers found it necessary to work. Today there are public assistance and insurance programs that provide income for

\* By a special committee of the Family-Child Welfare Division and the Day Care Section of the Council of Social Agencies, Cincinnati, Ohio.

† Daytime Care: A Partnership of Three Professions. Findings of Tri-Profession Conference on Day Care. C.W.L.A. March, 1946. 31 pp.

women who are the sole support of their family. However, many women hesitate to accept the minimum budget allowances provided by such programs. Often a mother is capable and anxious to provide higher standards of living for her family or to make a creative contribution of her own through employment. This may be in the best interests of the home. Though the number of women employed in the United States today is no longer at wartime peak, a far greater number of women are employed now than before World War II.

In all instances where Day Care Center care is requested, the needs of the individual child are the primary factor for consideration. Some of the family situations that do not contribute to the best interests of the child may be caused by sickness, tensions, difficulties in personality adjustment in the home, inadequate play space, or lack of companions. At such times the Day Care Center can meet certain needs of the child and, at the same time, enable the family to remain together. The Day Care Center is then serving as an agency to strengthen the family unit.

The Day Care Center tries to meet the needs of individual children and helps parents understand the behavior of their children as well as their own role in child growth and development. Teachers train the child in good physical and mental health habits and help the parent understand what to expect of their children in the matter of physical and mental growth, protection from disease, and personality development. Morning health inspections help insure that parents know when medical attention for children is needed. These inspections also result in protection for the remainder of the group, for the child showing symptoms of illness is separated from the other children.

The child, through supervised play with children of his own age, tends to have his social, physical, and emotional needs gratified. He learns to share, to take turns, to stand up for his own rights, and to respect the rights of others. His emotional needs are further satisfied by developing a feeling that he belongs to the group and that he is accepted by the other children. His various abilities may find expression through a larger variety of play and play materials than he has at home.

Educators, psychologists, and other leaders recognize the value of a supervised group experience for most children three years of age and above, preferably for a few hours a day. In the Day Care Center, it is often necessary for a child to stay a period of eight or nine hours a day. This in itself is not desirable. However, when considering a child's total situation, such care may be deemed advisable as compared with

other types of care available to meet the particular child's needs. The child who stays in the Day Care Center for the longer period of time obtains the educational and social values that accrue to the part-time nursery school experience.

The danger of the child developing a feeling of insecurity because of the long hours of separation from his family is recognized by workers in Day Care Centers. They attempt to provide experience within the Center to compensate for the absence of the mother and they counsel the mother in regard to the effect of separation on the child. In cases where a child reveals behavior problems of a serious nature, the mother is referred to a specialist for additional help.

### Standards of Operation

In order for the Day Care Center to fulfill its objectives, it is essential that it has sufficient and well-trained staff as well as adequate plant and equipment.

Provision must be made for all the following services:

1. Preliminary counseling with parents to determine the advisability and need for Day Care Center service; subsequent counseling, if the child is accepted, to insure the maximum use of the experience for both parent and child. Good counseling requires a mature worker, preferably trained in family casework, and requires time for individual and group discussion.
2. Professional guidance of children throughout the day. The teacher must have an understanding of the needs and development of the age child in her group. The after-school program should not be a continuation of the school work but should supplement it. An appropriately trained teacher working an eight hour day is needed for each ten children in a preschool group from ages 2 to 3½; a trained teacher working similar hours for each fifteen children from 3½ to 5. The number of children can be proportionately increased for each teacher as the children become more mature.
3. Promotion of good health practices and precautions. Inspection of children with provision of isolation room for children with suspicious symptoms who cannot be sent home. Sanitary surroundings, including kitchen, dishwashing, sleeping rooms, toilet facilities.
4. Management of the Center, planning menu, supervising the selection and preparation of food, serving of meals, keeping records, supervising the housekeeping services, etc.
5. Adequate play space, equipment, and play materials.
6. Provision of housekeeping services necessary to keep the Center clean and to handle the meals.

In addition, the Day Care Center should co-operate with local health agencies and other community services which have a bearing on their program. It is when the Day Care Center meets these minimum standards that it can offer the most constructive service to children.



# WE BELIEVE THAT:

A child's own home and family are the natural media in which normal social and personality development can best be assured.

If necessary, the child's own family should be assisted in every possible way to meet his needs in his own home.

Children should be cared for away from their own families only after efforts to bring about favorable conditions within the home for the wholesome development of the child have been unsuccessful.

Every child who must leave his own home and live away from his own family suffers a profound emotional and social disturbance which can never be altogether compensated.

The type of care which is provided for the child should be based on a consideration of the wishes of his parents, his individual needs, and his family situation.

For many of the children who must leave their own homes, foster family care offers the most favorable conditions for normal development.

A complete community child welfare program is necessary in order that each child may receive the care he requires.

The social casework method should be employed in determining and meeting the needs of children whose own parents are unable to give them the care they should have.

A broad understanding and knowledge of the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development of children are essential to casework with children.

The objectives of foster care should be to make available opportunities favorable for the maximum development of the child's native capacities and ability to cope with the life situations which he must face.

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